



Washington State  
Department of Social  
& Health Services  
*Medical Assistance  
Administration*

# News from HIPAA & Medicaid

**AN IMPORTANT MESSAGE FOR THE BILLING STAFFS OF HEALTH-CARE PROVIDERS:**

## **MEDICAID DISTRIBUTES FREE REGISTRATION INFORMATION TO HEALTH-CARE PROVIDERS PREPARING FOR HIPAA DEADLINE**

**OLYMPIA, Wash.** – The State of Washington began distributing informational packets to Washington State health-care providers this week, outlining the information the Medicaid program needs to continue accepting claims and making payments under the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA).

The packets also contain forms that are essential to testing. Providers should fill them out and return them quickly so they will be registered to test their HIPAA-compliant claims with Medicaid over the next two months. In addition, Medicaid plans to contact as many providers' billing offices as possible by telephone over the next two months to share information about how to file Medicaid claims in the future.

**MAA-HIPAA  
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All the information is being posted on the Web site of the Medical Assistance Administration (MAA) in the Department of Social and Health Services (<http://maa.dshs.wa.gov/dshshipaa>), as well as the Web site maintained by Affiliated Computer Services (ACS), the vendor that is working with the state to bring its computer systems into compliance with HIPAA (<http://www.acs-gcro.com>).

Providers – from community physicians to big-city hospitals and payers like Medicaid or health insurance carriers – all face an October 16, 2003, deadline under the federal HIPAA law, which aims to standardize the nation's health-care information system with uniform code sets and transactions.

**NOTE: Washington's Medicaid program will offer dual support through the fall and into the winter – which means providers will be able to use their current claims-filing system as a short-term backup in case their HIPAA-compliant system doesn't work, isn't ready by the deadline, or hits unpredictable snags. Providers should NOT have to consider reverting from electronic to paper claims, which take longer to process and will delay provider reimbursements.**

In the meantime, free testing will begin by September for the clearinghouses and practice management software vendors who want to verify the viability of their new systems. By October 1, individual providers will be encouraged to self-test their systems with Medicaid.

“Our basic message is: Don't turn off your old system, because it may be your salvation,” said Doug Porter, Assistant Secretary of the Medical Assistance Administration (MAA) of the Department of Social and Health Services, which operates the state's Medicaid program. Washington State's Medicaid program distributes nearly \$50 million a week to health-care providers, reimbursing them for care of low-income Medicaid clients. “This money goes directly to local doctors and hospitals in local communities all over the state,” Porter said. “Our top priority is to make sure that these reimbursements continue on a timely basis and that there is no interruption of care.”

# **HIPAA HELP**

Save these contacts at Medical Assistance Administration and the U.S. Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS):

## **Critical assistance for providers:**

Toll-free number for technical questions about HIPAA software and testing with Medicaid: 1-800-833-2051

DSHS HIPAA Web site for free software and HIPAA-compliance information: <http://maa.dshs.wa.gov/dshshipaa>

Federal HIPAA compliance site, with practical advice for providers and the answers to frequently-asked questions (FAQ): <http://www.cms.gov/hipaa>

Executive summary of MAA's HIPAA compliance plan:  
<http://maa.dshs.wa.gov/dshshipaa/attachments/pdf/HIPAA%20exec%20summary%20final%20061603.pdf>

ACS EDI Gateway, Inc., Web page: [http://www.acs-gcro.com/Medicaid\\_Accounts/medicaid\\_accounts.htm](http://www.acs-gcro.com/Medicaid_Accounts/medicaid_accounts.htm)

## **Human contact:**

Chris Johnson, HIPAA Contingency Planning, 360-725-1239

Paul Price, HIPAA Provider Testing, 360-725-1256

Kathy Wyr, HIPAA Communications Manager, 360-725-2129  
(wyerka@dshs.wa.gov)

Jim Stevenson, MAA Communications Director, 360-725-1915  
(stevejh2@dshs.wa.gov)

## **ASK HIPAA?**

Send e-mail questions to [hipaacom munications@dshs.wa.gov](mailto:hipaacom munications@dshs.wa.gov)

## **Subscribe to these bulletins by e-mail:**

Send your e-mail address to [stevejh2@dshs.wa.gov](mailto:stevejh2@dshs.wa.gov)

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